

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-7, 9-11 and 47-55 were pending. The allowance of claims 1-7, 10, 11 and 55 is noted with appreciation. Claims 9 and 47-54 have been rejected over the Miya et al., Mito and Matsukawa et al. references.

Claim 9 has been amended to include the feature of Claim 49, which is being canceled. Claim 9 is also being amended to state that the atmosphere blocking member is smaller in diameter than the substrate. Reconsideration is requested.

Miya et al. (U.S. 2004/0040584) discloses an atmosphere blocking member (102) and a substrate having the same diameter (Fig. 13) and teaches that a spin base (104) is used as the atmosphere blocking member.

Mito (U.S. 2002/0106445) discloses a spin base (chuck 8) having a substrate-facing surface, which is faced with the other major surface of the substrate and becomes closer to the substrate with a distance toward a periphery edge of the spin base (chuck 8)(Fig. 1).

However, the cited references neither disclose nor indicate how the substrate is supported (i.e. the structure of any support member), in cases where the spin base (equivalent to the “atmosphere blocking member” of the present invention) has a diameter which is smaller than that of the substrate as now claimed.

On the contrary, according to the claimed invention, even though the atmosphere blocking member has a diameter which is smaller than that of the substrate, at least three or more support members are disposed at the periphery edge of the atmosphere blocking member, abut on an edge surface of the substrate, and accordingly support the substrate.

Thus, according to the claimed invention, it is possible to support the substrate even though the atmosphere blocking member has a diameter which is smaller than that of the substrate. Thus, the substrate-facing surface of the atmosphere blocking member is not exposed to a mist-splashed atmosphere, thereby preventing a mist (mist-like processing liquid) from invading the other major surface of the substrate.

There is no description in the cited references that predicts either the claimed apparatus or the above-mentioned effects. Therefore, the structure of the support member and other features of claim 9 is neither disclosed nor suggested by the cited references.

Reconsideration and allowance of claims 9, 47, 48 and 50-54 is therefore requested.

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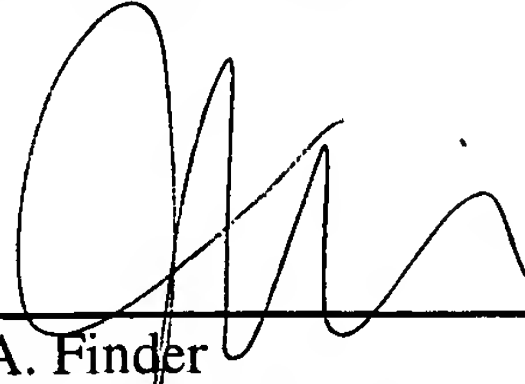
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